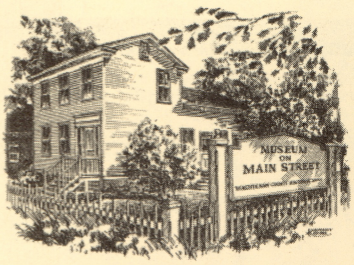

IMPRESSIONS

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • FOUNDED 1857 • SEPTEMBER 2005

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INFORMATION

Published Seven Times A Year From September-May.

Museum On Main Street
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Post Office Box 3336
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336

Phone: 734.662.9092
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Email: wchs-500@ameritech.net
Web Site:
www.washtenawhistory.org

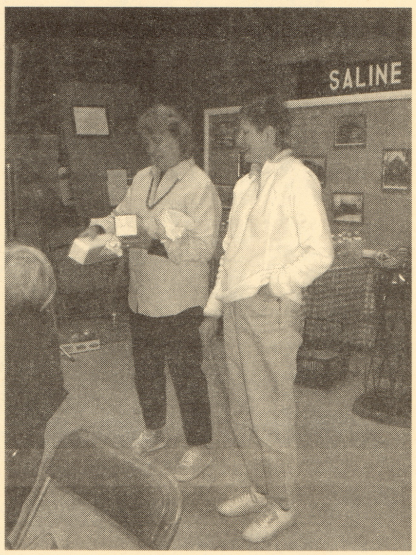
Annual dues: January-December individual, $15; couple/family $25; student or senior (60+) $10; senior couple $19; business/association $50; patron $100.

Annual Meeting & Potluck

The annual meeting and potluck supper was held Wednesday, May 18, 2005 at Rentschler Farm barn in Saline. Mother Nature cooperated by providing a nice spring evening. We were able to wander the grounds to see sheep, goats, chickens and guinea hens. Many guests got into the spirit of things by wearing jeans and casual attire. Before dinner, there was a tour of the Rentschler farm home by Gladys Saborio and Wayne Clements, President of the Saline Area Historical Society and host of our meeting.

As usual the food was great. There were very tasty casseroles, salads and desserts. Combined with the ham provided by our Society and six loaves of bread donated by Zingerman's, we all enjoyed a delicious meal.

During the business meeting following the meal, various board members reported activities during the past year. The slate of candidates presented by the nominating committee was elected unanimously. All officers were reelected as were the board members and endowment committee member whose terms were expiring. Karen Koykka O'Neal was presented with a brass plaque to be placed on our sidewalk honoring our "History Making Contributors." After the meeting, Wayne Clements told about upcoming events scheduled at the Saline Depot and the Rentschler Farm.



Karen Koykka O'Neal receiving brass plaque *(photo by Judith Chrisman)*

The evening concluded with a presentation by Sue Kosky and Gladys Saborio. Sue spoke about the US 12 Heritage Council Project, how each building was documented, mapped and photographed. The Saline area was the first to get their section done, followed by Clinton. Last year the Sauk Trail, US 12, was designated an historic highway. Gladys then showed slides of some of the important buildings and landmarks along the way—some lost, some in danger and some adapted for reuse. Some examples of those that are in danger are the Clinton Woolen Mill, an octagon house in Jonesville, a Carnegie Library, the Four Flags Motel in Niles where Al Capone and Eleanor Roosevelt have stayed, the first tourist information center in the nation, the brick Walker Tavern and the twin towers in the Irish Hills. In a park in Somerset township are examples of '*trabajo rustico*' done by Mexican artisans. They are sculptures of chicken wire, metal rods and concrete made to look like wood and rope.

Members enjoying potluck dinner at Rentschler Farm barn *(photo by Judith Chrisman)*

Members of the council continue to add to the list of historic and important landmarks every day. Although everything cannot be saved, it all needs to be photographed and documented before it is lost.

The barn turned out to be a perfect location for our annual event. We want to thank Wayne Clements and Agnes Dikeman for all they did to make it a very enjoyable evening.

SUSAN NENADIC • JUNE 19, 2005

Women's Work & Style In Washtenaw County From 1837 & 1914

This was a talk given by Susan Nenadic at the Open House for the current exhibit on Sunday, June 19.

The exhibit runs through Sunday, October 9, 2005.

Hats by local milliners *(photo by Judith Chrisman)*

All of us are familiar with the joke about history being an accounting of *his story*. Indeed, it is true that much of American history details the events and deeds of the male sex. Nonetheless, I believe that the little-recorded events and deeds of history, specifically about the *Women's Work & Style in Washtenaw County from 1837 to 1914*, are just as significant.

Even though most historical information about American women focuses on the themes of suffrage, unionism and birth control, I chose to investigate the daily lives of women in Washtenaw County during the nineteenth century (1837-1914). Since my focus was too vast a topic for one exhibit, I limited this exhibit to women who, whether for need or desire, established themselves in the businesses and professional communities dominated by men.

Conducting historical research on the theme of women in Washtenaw County can be a challenge. When I first arrived at the Bentley and told its curators the theme of my project, they just rolled their eyes and said dishearteningly, "Well, good luck."

Yet, two months later, I accumulated almost 100 pages of notes and felt I had only scratched the surface of women's events and deeds between the time of Michigan's statehood (1837) and World War I.

Not surprisingly, most the women who made significant contributions to history were residents of Ann Arbor or Ypsilanti. The reasons, I believe, are that Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, as towns, are slightly older, slightly larger and have long-standing institutions of higher learning. Still, there are interesting working women from the other smaller towns in Washtenaw County, such as Saline, Chelsea, Dexter, Milan and Manchester. (As an aside, I hope that anyone who knows of such a woman in their town's past will contact me so that she might be included in this study.)

Willis Frederick Dunbar, in his history of Michigan, writes that "teaching and domestic labor were the chief occupations by which a woman could earn a living in 1860." His statement is NOT supported by 1870 census which shows that domestic labor was the number one occupation. Teaching, according to the 1870 census, ranked fifth as women's occupations.

A rudimentary survey of the city directories of Washtenaw County during that same period sets the record straight showing that, in towns, sewing was one of the only available ways for a woman to earn a living. In the 1860s, there were over two dozen such women listed in the directories. Examples were: Mrs. Britt on Main Street and Miss Maycumber, both of Ann Arbor, and Mrs. O. S. Coe of Ypsilanti. Each owned shops that employed several other women to assist them with their sewing.

Perhaps, even more surprising, is a group of enterprising women like Mrs. Schumacher who ran one of 80 (Yes, 80!) saloons in Ann Arbor for about five years, beginning in 1868. Another example is Miss Eliza Storms who sold sewing machines in Ann Arbor in 1872. Finally, one of my favorite examples is Mrs. Serena E. Becraft who lived at the corner of Catherine and Detroit streets in 1874 and advertised her work skills as that of a taxidermist.

Dunbar correctly noted in his writings that teaching school offered better employment opportunities for better educated women. Schools and colleges began appearing as soon as communities were settled. Very few clues have been left to us about their histories. One of those is Mrs. Eliza Botsford who taught in the Ann Arbor public schools from 1858 to 1881. Encouraged by a cousin to come to Michigan, she soon met and married Mr. Botsford who was a prominent merchant in Ann Arbor. Unfortunately, he died two years after they married leaving Eliza with a baby daughter. Mrs. Botsford assumed the dual responsibilities of motherhood and teaching and went to teach in the Ann Arbor school system for the next 35 years.

The most renowned early

Teachers, school books and slates *(photo by Judith Chrisman)*

teacher was Miss Mary Clark who established a seminary school for girls in 1839. This school remained open for almost forty years until Miss Clark's death. The seminary edifice still stands at the corner of Kingsley and Division. In the early 1800s, there were no academic schools for girls until Miss Emma Willard established her seminary school in Troy, New York in 1821. The Reverend Clark sent his daughters, including Mary, to this seminary school, and it was that school that was the model for Miss Clark.

When Miss Clark established the seminary in Ann Arbor, her sister, Chloe, taught the primary grades; and Mary taught college preparatory subjects ranging from geometry to astronomy. Mary Clark was recognized as expert in botany. Within a decade of the school's opening, students were coming from as far away as New York. Of her 97 students in 1849, 36 were not from Ann Arbor.

Washtenaw County is atypical in history, because it did not have the large textile mills and factories that offered employment to so many women in the East. Here, most women had small independent businesses.

Statistically, in Washtenaw County, 28 percent of the women in the late nineteenth-century were either un-married or widowed. I was especially intrigued by Mrs. Elsie Madary. Mrs. Madary was an African American widow who, between 1883 and 1906, advertised her business as a dyer/scourer of hides.

Another example was Mrs. Catherine Caspary. Mrs. Caspary's husband began a bakery in 1884 on Ann Street. Two years later he left that enterprise to her and started a saloon. She ran the bakery for the next 30-years.

Mrs. Hangsterfer and Mrs. Gerstner took over businesses when their husbands could no longer run them. Mrs. Hangsterfer ran a confectionary/tobacco/ice cream emporium where the Mongolian BBQ now stands, and Mrs. Gerstner operated a bakery on Detroit Street.

One of my favorites is Mrs. Eliza Hall Cousins Brogan. Not long before her first husband, William Cousins, passed away, they established a florist shop and greenhouse where the School of Social Work now stands on South University. In 1895, she married Thomas Brogan. In researching this story, I could not determine how Eliza Cousins met Thomas Brogan, because I was unable to find anyone named Brogan in the directories. I finally found an 1894 directory that listed a James Brogan. At first I was confused since I thought that he was the wrong man. But guess where he worked? Cousins and Hall Florists! And so, I assume Thomas Brogan was a relative of James' who came to Ann Arbor, met Eliza and worked with her for a few years before he opened a confectionary/cigar shop on Main Street.

Florists and saloonkeepers *(photo by Judith Chrisman)*

Another woman I found intriguing was Miss Katie J. Rogers. Miss Rogers was born in Ann Arbor in 1849. She graduated from the Ann Arbor High School and studied art in Chicago. In 1876, she returned to Ann Arbor and opened a studio. She came by her artistic skill naturally since her paternal uncle is the nationally recognized sculptor, Randolph Rogers. Her father, Moses Rogers, established an agricultural implement store in 1843. In 1866, he built a new building which is now the home of the *Ann Arbor Observer*. He also had a factory on Broadway that employed 65 workers. When he died in 1888, Katie took over the business and ran it for seven years until selling it and returning to her art.

Photography was another artistic area that appealed to women. Miss Lucretia Gillett came to Saline in 1858 and established herself as a photographer. She maintained a business there for 30 years. In Ypsilanti, Mrs. J. H Parsons ran her own photographic studio for many years. (It should be noted that, in 1885, there were almost a thousand women photographers in the United States.)

Laundresses ranked number seven in 1870 as an occupation for women. In 1910, this position rose to number three. (Clearly, as a country, the United States was becoming more fastidious.) Miss Sophia Allmendinger (not the wife of John) began on such a career path as an employee of Seabolt Laundry. In 1894, however, she opened her own laundry in the first block of East Liberty which survived several metamorphoses to become the White Star Laundry that was still in business in 1914 when our study

ends.

The latter part of the nineteenth century offered women opportunities as office clerical workers. The typewriter was invented in 1890. By 1910, office work ranked eighth, and by 1930 it ranked third in the number of women it employed. At about that time, some local women were becoming bookkeepers for local businesses. One of our local history books claims that Miss Marie Rominger was the first woman to be a bookkeeper in Ann Arbor. Actually, that claim should belong to Miss Berthe Muehlig who began her work tenure around 1892-two years before Miss Rominger. Miss Muehlig's bookkeeping skills and business acumen evolved so that by 1911 she held the ownership of the dry goods store. A bookkeeper could earn about $12 per week which, according to Mrs. M. L. Rayne, the author of a book published in Detroit in 1865, *What Can a Woman Do?*, was about the same weekly wage as a teacher. Miss Anna L Clinton who began teaching in 1892 said that, after four years of teaching, the salary of an elementary school teacher in Ann Arbor peaked at $400 per year.

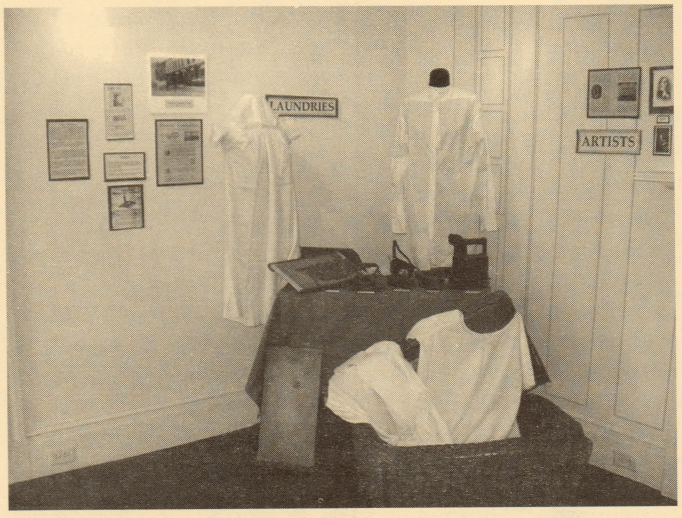
The history and background of the lives and work of these and other Washtenaw County women obviously dispel the stereotype that women were not capable in the world of business. By 1887, 20 percent of those paying the highest taxes in Ann Arbor were women. Several women during the period of 1837–1914 were also influential in real estate speculation. Miss Ellen Morse and her mother, Hanorah, owned multiple properties on North State Street which were boarding houses. One of those at 403 North State was the first home for elderly ladies before it was moved in 1920 and became the Anna Botsford Bach Home on West Liberty.

Another Ann Arbor namesake is Mrs. Olivia B. Hall. After her husband, Israel, passed away, Mrs. Hall bought the old fairgrounds and subdivided it. She built houses insisting that they be set 60 feet from the street. This area is now one of Ann Arbor's most prestigious. Perhaps you have driven down Olivia Street or Cambridge Avenue, which used to be called Israel Avenue. Olivia Hall's subdivisions reached from Hill to Wells and from Washtenaw to Lincoln.

These women, I am discovering, formed the tip of the historical iceberg. Each week I find more and more about the lives and deeds of women in Washtenaw County through the city, village, and township records. Usually, just the barest facts about their lives and deeds are given.

This investigation about *her story* in Washtenaw County, so often overlooked, needs to be collected, preserved and remembered. After all, think how enriched the people of Washtenaw County are because they know how their mothers and sisters live and work.

Recorded July 12, 2005



Laundry items *(photo by Judith Chrisman)*

Future Annual Meeting & Potluck

The Board of Directors is looking into the idea of changing the annual meeting from the third Wednesday of May to another day during that month. The third Sunday of May has been suggested. It could be held as a brunch and meeting (1 or 2 pm), as an early supper (4 pm) or at our usual meeting time of 6pm. We would hope that such a change would enable more of our members to attend. Please let us know your thoughts on this subject—best day, best time, good location, other ideas including keeping the traditional day. You can call the Museum at (734) 662-9092, email us at wchs-500@ameritech.net or send a letter to P.O. Box 3336, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336. This is your meeting and we would like to hear from you.

JUDITH CHRISMAN • PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Summer At MoMS

If you have visited or driven by the museum during the summer, you may have noticed that the fence and the house have been painted. Ed Rice, a specialist in historic preservation and graduate of the Historic Preservation Program at Eastern Michigan University, his helpers and some volunteers have done a great job scraping, power washing, priming, caulking, repairing and painting in spite of the hot weather and occasional storms. John Chrisman repaired the two large signs that were found to have rotted wood in them. He is carving new finials to replace the missing ones which are no longer available commercially.

Iris Gruhl, our Master Gardener, has made sure that the garden continues to draw the attention and praise of passers-by. The sedum she planted along the parkways is beginning to take hold and spread. Various board members and volunteers have helped with weeding, mowing and watering to keep the garden looking nice all summer.

Ed Rice scaping the front of MoMS *(from the Ann Arbor News, Thursday July 28, photo by Eliyahu Gurfinkel)*

You may have noticed the displaced bricks in the front of the museum. On Monday, August 8, Pauline Walters received a phone call from the police around 9 a.m. saying that someone had run into the museum. She called me and we both went to the museum fearing the worst. As it turned out a woman on her cell phone lost control of her car as she turned the corner from Beakes onto Main Street. The car jumped the curb and knocked down the guy wires to the telephone pole, the state highway sign and a tree—not the museum. As the guy wires and sign went down they pulled up the bricks at the bus stop in front of the museum.

Uprooted sign, tree and bricks *(photo by Judith Chrisman)*

In Memorium

We are sad to report the death of Lawrence Ziegler who passed away unexpectedly on August. 3. He was the husband of the late Alice Ziegler, a long-time board member and editor of Washtenaw *Impressions* for 25 years. A memorial service was held Tuesday, August 30 at St. Francis of Assisi Church. Burial will be in Leland Cemetery, Northfield Township.

Next Exhibit

The Sewing Arts exhibit will open October 26. The exhibit will be an exploration of handiwork from the collection including quilting, lace making, tatting, knitting, crocheting, various kinds of embroidery and sewing. The exhibit will run through the holidays. Our traditional Christmas tree and holiday decorations will be added in December.

Conservation Of A 19th Century Nightgown

Women of Washtenaw County participated in the workforce of the mid-19th century through the early 20th century, assuming traditional job roles and some not-so-traditional. Come see the ***Women's Work and Style 1837 – 1914 Exhibit*** at the Washtenaw County Historical Museum on 500 North Main and at Beakes and East Kingsley. The exhibit runs until Sunday, October 9, 2005.

In the *Women's Work and Style Exhibit*, one of the artifacts on display in the middle exhibit room is a nightgown. Surprisingly, a nightgown is a textile (as it was called at the time) and piece of clothing that has not changed in time since it was first used. Before the 1860s, nightgowns in America were hand-stitched.

However, discerning the exact date when the exhibit's nightgown was made is harder to pinpoint. We do have some clues, though, to help us determine the approximate time of its origin. First, it is a machine-stitched textile vs. hand-stitched; and so the time when it was made would probably be after 1860 when machines were being used to make a piece of clothing like this nightgown. Secondly, the nightgown is made from lace that is machine-made which puts it after 1880 when lacey nightgowns were the fashion. Third, it has a name on it, *Emma A. Hall*, which is written perpendicularly to the floor and in black ink. Finally, it has the number "4" written on the front upper-section. Most likely the nightgown was made in the 1880s, but more research would need to be done to determine a more exact time.

Nightgown—Emma A. Hall is written on the front closure near the waist, probably a laundry mark *(photo by Judith Chrisman)*

The nightgown's textile-material is cotton that is finely spun and machine stitched. Lace and shirring have been applied, especially around the neck. All the lace and shirring appears to be machine-made. A size adjustment was made to it; the hem was taken up and folded once or twice. There is some shirring on the wrists too.

When you look at the nightgown as a piece of textile, you can see that it was damaged through use. Damage might have been done by cleaning, folding, or the like. Also, damage to the cloth may have come while it was in the collection of the museum, either through handling, cleaning, or storage. As a rule, a textile like this nightgown should not be handled unless necessary, and then only with gloves. Also, a textile like this should not be cleaned more than necessary. If it is white, it should not be bleached. Applying bleaching causes the textile fiber to disintegrate causing holes in the fabric. Finally, a textile like the nightgown should not be stored in plastic because plastics can give off gases that harm the fibers in the cloth.

The optimal method of storing a textile like the nightgown and others like it is cloth wrappers and darkness. Another option is to wrap it in archival tissue and store it in an archival box. Also, it should be stored under an ambient temperature condition of not too hot and not too cold.

If you have a question about preserving or maintaining a textile like the nightgown or other artifacts in the exhibit, send your inquiry to the Washtenaw County Historical Society at wchs-500@ameritech.net

Editor's Note: Emma Amelia Hall graduated from Michigan Normal School in Ypsilanti in 1861. She taught at the Detroit House of Correction and was matron at the School for Defective Children. She then moved to Adrian in 1881 to become Superintendent of the Reform School for Girls. She was the first woman to head a state institution.

Emma Amelia Hall *(photo from the Bentley Historical Library collection)*

Program Schedule 2005-2006

Sunday September 18, 2005 • 2 pm
THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE THRU BACK DOOR
Speaker: *Anne Duderstadt*
Location: Duderstadt Ctr, UM North Campus, AA

Sunday, October 16 • 2 pm
THE TROLLIES OF ANN ARBOR
Speaker: *H. Mark Hildebrandt*
Location: Glacier Hills Retirement Community, AA

Sunday, Nov. 20 • 2 pm
EARHART MANOR
Speaker: *David Kennedy*
Location: Earhart Manor, 4090 Geddes Rd, AA

Sunday, February 19, 2006 • 2 pm
COBBLESTONE STRUCTURES
Speaker: *Grace Shackman & Patricia Majher*
Location: Cobblestone Farm Barn, 2781 Packard

Sunday, March 19 • 2 pm
NAME ORIGINS of LOCAL STREETS/ROADS
Speaker: *Jeff Mortimer*
Location: University Commons, 817 Asa Gray, AA

Sunday, April 23 • 2 pm
COMBINED MEETING of GSWC & WCHS
Topics of interest
Location: Education Bldg, SJMH, Parking Lot 'P'

May 2006
WCHS ANNUAL MEETING
Potluck supper & election of officers • Date & location to be determined

Announcements

GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Sunday, September 25, 2005 • 1:30 P.M.
Education Center Auditorium • Parking Lot P, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Campus • 5305 Elliott Dr., Superior Township, Michigan
Free and open to the public

TOPIC: Genetic Genealogy, Fracturing Brick Walls. Dr. James M. Freed will share success stories of genealogists who have overcome major blocks (brick walls) in their genealogical studies using genetic techniques. He will emphasize the significance of using both the Y chromosome and mitochondrial chromosome DNA.

Following, Dr. Freed will continue his presentation with a class on **Genetic Genealogy, More Information and Activities.**

For information contact Marcia McCrary at (734)483-2799 or Marciamccr@aol.com

SOUSA BAND CONCERT

Thursday, October 20, 2005 • 7:30 P.M. • FREE
Pease Auditorium, Eastern Michigan University

In recognition of the 75th anniversary of Sousa's appearance in Ypsilanti, a free recreation of a Sousa Band concert will be performed by the **Ypsilanti Community Band,** conducted by Jerry Robbins. Nine major numbers, ranging from opera to comedy, with something of interest to everyone in the family will be played. The entire greater Ypsilanti community is invited to join in this celebration.

Volunteer Opportunities

BOARD MEMBER. Looking for new board members. Board meets the third Wednesday of the month at 5 p.m. except July and December

PUBLICATIONS. Prepare our newsletter, Washtenaw *Impressions*, for publication, keep our website up-to-date.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE. For minor repairs, painting and garden work.

OFFICE HELP. Good organization skills necessary.

LIBRARIAN. Organize research library using books in our collection

EXHIBITION RESEARCH AND PREPARATION. Help with the research and development of an exhibition program fro the museum. Commitment – a few hours a month.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION ASSISTANT. Assist with the growth and development of an educational outreach program for the Museum.

MUSEUM GREETERS. Greet and assist visitors during the museum's open hours of Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday from 12-4 pm. Work as often as you like—at least one day or one weekend per month preferred but any help will be great.

GARDEN VOLUNTEERS.

Contact Alice Cerniglia, Director
Washtenaw County Historical Society • Museum on Main Street
Phone 734-662-9092 • wchs-500@ameritech.net

MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET
A Museum Of County Life

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Post Office Box 3336
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-3336

Non-Profit Org.
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SUNDAY • 2 PM
SEPTEMBER 18, 2005

"THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE THROUGH THE BACK DOOR"

SPEAKER • ANNE DUDERSTADT

DUDERSTADT CENTER • ROOM 1180
TELECONFERENCE CENTER
UM NORTH CAMPUS
BONISTEEL BLVD.

NANCY KROHN
905 ROBIN RD
ANN ARBOR MI 48103-3008

SATURDAY • SEPTEMBER 24, 2005

Wander Washtenaw

The Washtenaw County Historical Consortium invites those interested in history to **Wander Washtenaw**. Most sites will be open from **10 a.m. to 4 p.m.** that day.

Look for maps and address lists at your favorite local museum. The event will be free, with donations encouraged at the sites to recover expenses. Historical museums involved include:

Ann Arbor:
- Kempf House
- Cobblestone Farm
- Detroit Observatory
- Museum on Main Street
- Parker Mill

Milan:
- Hack House

Ypsilanti:
- Michigan Fire Museum
- Ypsilanti Historical Museum

Dexter area:
- Dexter Area Museum
- Webster Church Fall Festival

Salem:
- Jarvis Stone School

Manchester:
- Schneider Blacksmith Shop

Saline:
- Rentschler Farm
- Railroad Depot

Several sites are having special events, particularly the Webster Church Fall Festival and the Crafts show at the Hack House.

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Washtenaw County Historical Society is to foster interest in and to elucidate the history of Washtenaw County from the time of the original inhabitants to the present. Its mission shall be to carry out the mandate as stated through the preservation and presentation of artifacts and information by exhibit, assembly, and publication. And to teach, especially our youth, the facts, value and the uses of Washtenaw County history through exhibits in museums and classrooms, classes, tours to historical places, and other educational activities.